

## CONSIDERATIONS IN WORKING WITH PARTNER AIR FORCES – CONTEXT AND CULTURE

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

## **CONSIDERATIONS IN WORKING WITH PARTNER AIR FORCES – CONTEXT AND CULTURE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Understanding environmental context and how to affect organizational culture is critical to effective security forces assistance (SFA), especially when working with host nation air forces. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the need for a robust SFA effort. A critical and integral component is building an effective air force capable of meeting the immediate needs of the counterinsurgency effort and long term security interests of the country. In Iraq, then Brig Gen Robert Allardice, serving as the Coalition Air Force Transition Team Commander, proposed and implemented a counterintuitive approach to rebuilding the Iraqi Air Force which was to “get them in the air” first, as a priority ahead of building capability and capacity. Understanding unique air force capabilities, the environmental context of a counterinsurgency, and the cultural components of air force organizations shows this counterintuitive approach is an effective methodology both in the near term and long term.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN WORKING WITH PARTNER AIR FORCES – CONTEXT AND CULTURE

In June 2007, I arrived at Kirkuk Regional Air Base to stand up an advisory squadron tasked with training, advising, and assisting the Iraqi Air Force to establish an airborne Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capability as part of the overall rebuilding effort of the Iraqi Air Force. In retrospect, two things stand out as I began my tour. First, I didn't fully appreciate the role of an advisor and the potential scope of our impact. Second, while I was familiar with the term "counterinsurgency" and knew we were participating in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Iraq, I didn't fully understand the linkage between the advisor mission, especially regarding air forces and airpower, and success in counterinsurgency operations. In short, I was about to experience individually what the U.S. armed forces had been experiencing and relearning collectively in Iraq. A counterinsurgency effort requires a different and smarter approach to applying military power. As an advisor in a COIN fight, I quickly came to realize the foundational importance of security force assistance to the success of the war effort, the unique contribution an air force provides, and that training, advising, and assisting an air force is a unique endeavor.

When I arrived, I was given the direction to get the Iraqi squadron we were advising "in the air." While efforts were being initiated along multiple lines of capacity building, the priority became generating sorties. This initially appeared backwards in that building capability is normally the prerequisite to initiating operations. However, in the case of rebuilding an air force, the counterintuitive approach of "getting them in the air" as the number one priority proved to be critical on two fronts. First, as previously

stated, a counterinsurgency fight is different and an air force has a powerful role to play. The sooner the air force can engage, than the greater the synergistic effects can be realized. This results in greater chances of success in the overall effort and allows a quicker exit for partner forces. Second, the advisor effort has a goal of establishing an effective, professional, and sustainable force. Foundational in this effort is creating an organizational culture that supports the core capabilities necessary for a force to be effective. In the case of an air force, that culture must have a general military component as well as an air force-specific component. This paper looks at how “getting them in the air” served both purposes.

### Background

The United States has a long history of providing security force assistance starting with the Spanish-American War. Since World War II, the United States participated in large scale advisory and partnering efforts associated with the major wars in Korea and Vietnam. However, despite these past efforts and lessons learned, at the start of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq the services found themselves with little in the way of an enduring partnership building capability. In fact, until recently the services regarded large scale advisory duties as an aberration and as a result did not have institutional mechanisms for effective advisory and partnering activities. As a result, the initial efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been characterized as “ad hoc” and suffered the inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness associated with “reinventing the wheel.”<sup>1</sup>

With the United States once again engaged in counterinsurgency operations, the U.S. Army recognized a corresponding gap in both doctrine and the common understanding among Army officers of how to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign.

John Nagl writes, “It is not unfair to say that in 2003 most Army officers knew more about the U.S. Civil War than they did about counterinsurgency.”<sup>2</sup> The Army’s response was a complete re-write of Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, that was released in December 2006.<sup>3</sup> The release of the new doctrine and the corresponding decision by the President to surge troops into Iraq brought counterinsurgency theory into the public consciousness and provided a large-scale test of the new doctrine. Integral to the new field manual was the concept of developing host nation security forces. The manual devoted an entire chapter to the challenges, resources, framework, and various other considerations inherent to developing effective host nation forces.<sup>4</sup>

As a part of the effort to develop an effective host nation force in Iraq, the U.S. Air Force established five advisory squadrons during the spring and summer of 2007. These squadrons belonged to the Coalition Air Force Transition Team (CAFTT), a subordinate organization to the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I). Their task was to begin a robust effort to rebuild the Iraqi Air Force. Unfortunately, the Air Force lacked the doctrinal resources available to the Army and Marine Corps found in FM 3-24. While FM 3-24 did address the role of airpower, as a U.S. Army field manual it concentrated primarily on the contribution of ground forces in a counterinsurgency and the need to develop host nation ground forces. Recognizing the need for updated guidance, the U.S. Air Force published Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*, in August 2007 and AFDD 2-3.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, in September 2007 to provide a framework for building fledgling Air Forces. However, neither provided the robustness or methodology found in FM 3-24 and neither were considered adequate for building a counterinsurgency air force.<sup>5</sup>



With the absence of air force-specific doctrine, the CAFTT commander, then Brigadier General Robert Allardice, directed the development of a campaign plan to coordinate the efforts of the U.S. Airman and coalition partners engaged in the rebuilding effort. The CAFTT was engaged at all levels to include advising the IqAF Chief of Staff and his Air Staff, assisting in the development of a functioning air operations center and effective C2, and engagement in the development of processes and procedures to function operationally.<sup>6</sup> The resulting mission statement became “Build an Iraqi Air Force capable of conducting sustained operations, focused on the COIN fight in the near-term, in order to defeat terrorism and create a stable environment, while setting the conditions for achieving air sovereignty.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, General Allardice established three priorities operating along three lines of operation. These priorities were: 1) Get the Iraqi Air Force in the air; 2) Develop operational capacity (weapons systems, training systems, and infrastructure development); 3) Develop a management and command and control capacity. The lines of operation to which these priorities applied were: 1) Build, Train, Educate and Sustain; 2) Conduct COIN operations; 3) Provide Homeland Defense Capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

Notable in these priorities and lines of operation are two significant items. First, the number one priority was “getting the Iraqi Air Force in the air” ahead of capability and capacity building. Second, the intent was to get them in the air as a means of building capability along all three lines of operation simultaneously. By way of analogy, the goal was to fly the airplane while building it. The remainder of this paper will address how this approach, in the absence of air force-specific doctrine, is an

appropriate methodology in generating host nation air forces in a COIN environment. Specifically, generating host nation sorties has immediate effects with regard to the COIN fight and it provides for significant long-term organizational cultural benefits with regard to building a viable flying organization.

#### “Get them in the Air” – Essential to the COIN Fight

Training and fielding a host nation security force is one of the most effective means of fighting and winning the military element of the COIN environment.<sup>9</sup> Getting a host nation air force in the air in the midst of a counterinsurgency is especially advantageous. Airpower, especially when applied by the host nation, works not only as a force multiplier for ground security forces but has application across the full spectrum of counterinsurgency efforts to include providing critical capabilities that bolster governance, legitimacy and security.

Current thought and doctrine regarding COIN efforts now recognize the need for a population-centered approach.<sup>10</sup> Securing the civilian population is seen as being the higher priority than simply destroying the enemy. As a result, political power becomes the central issue with each side aiming to get the population to accept its governance and authority as legitimate.<sup>11</sup> At the core, a COIN effort consists of a political battlefield where perceptions and beliefs are what matter.<sup>12</sup>

Legitimacy, as defined by the population, is the “holy grail” of the perceptions and beliefs battle. In a counterinsurgency effort, legitimacy is often gained or pursued through the development of effective governance.<sup>13</sup> Effective governance, in most modern societies, provides three core functions which when done well allows the state to be seen as competent and legitimate. First, a government should be effective in providing public goods and services to include healthcare, education, electricity, water,

and sanitation. With basic service provisions in place a government is then able to support economic development which is critical to a sense of social well-being. Second, government should manage political participation and accountability which, when done well, should result in a stable, peaceful, and prosperous society. Third, effective governments provide security for the people and their property as well as providing for the maintenance of order. Security is foundational in governance because in its absence the other functions of government cannot be fulfilled.<sup>14</sup> Because security is so essential, the establishment of legitimate security forces is considered one of the most urgent governmental functions.<sup>15</sup>

The population-centric nature of a counterinsurgency operation means that ground security forces will be the most visible and most heavily engaged forces in the variety of offensive, defensive, and stabilization efforts. However, the elements of modern airpower are, without a doubt, a force multiplier in the support of ground security forces. But more importantly an air capability provides synergistic capabilities supporting and connecting the entire COIN effort from strengthening the security forces, to assisting a government's efforts to provide goods and services, to lending support to a government's political leadership and their goals and messages.

The unique advantages of the air domain are found in the combinations of speed, range, persistence, flexibility, and potential lethality that are available when applied with the right equipment, training, and knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Employed in a COIN environment, airpower can provide:<sup>17</sup>

- Aerial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)

- Air transport to include troop and equipment movement, MEDEVAC, humanitarian assistance, and DV airlift
- Close air support for land forces
- Helicopter troop lift
- Counterair
- Interdiction

Because insurgent movements are not characterized by large industrial, transportation, communications, or military centers they are not vulnerable to classic air campaigns. Therefore, the various air power capabilities need to be applied in various direct and indirect methods to contribute to the fundamental political strategies.<sup>18</sup> In the words of Col Robyn Read, “Air power can do far more than destroy a particular target – it can profoundly influence the human condition. Through selective engagement, airpower can support a recovering population; encourage one element while discouraging another; monitor, deter, transport, and connect; and assist in establishing the conditions for a safe and secure future.”<sup>19</sup>

By way of example, a transport aircraft can provide a greater degree of responsiveness and initiative by the transport of ground forces to engage insurgents while also providing responsive, life-saving MEDEVAC assistance to both military and civilian casualties. With the emergence of roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in recent conflicts, air transport takes on even greater importance by preserving a freedom of movement not available to ground forces that insurgents will often lack the technology and capability to counter. ISR platforms can provide direct support to engaged ground forces or indirectly support the government’s efforts to provide goods

and services by surveying hundreds of miles of oil pipelines or electrical power lines. Because of the air platform's relative speed, range, and flexibility there exists the ability to report damage "real-time" or better yet, catch sabotage "in the act" and direct ground forces to interdict. The application of airpower capabilities both through direct military engagement and through indirect humanitarian or governmental support can promote a government's credibility and improve the quality of life for its population.<sup>20</sup>

While it is possible for coalition or intervening air forces to engage in these air operations, there is an inherent dilemma due to the fact that the "outside presence" could actually fuel the opposition undermining the counterinsurgency effort.<sup>21</sup> Because the primary goal is a population-supported government, any means to provide indirect versus direct support by non-host nation forces should be pursued. Instead, host nation security forces should be as visible as possible to help convince the population that the government merits their allegiance.<sup>22</sup>

An independent and effective host nation security force is one of the key success metrics to measure the progress against an insurgency. Therefore, the ability to get host nation aircraft "in the air" becomes a critical signal of government capacity and legitimacy. Fielding an air force extends the state's presence, creates the appearance of "being the eventual victor," and demonstrates the effective administration and development of political institutions.<sup>23</sup> LtGen Kamal Barznji, former Iraqi Air Force Chief of Staff, commented on this point in an interview with Jim Michaels from USA Today. He stated the real utility of having an air force was the "prestige factor." He went on to say, that other countries in the region with high-end fighters really had little use for them

other than for flying them in airshows. The point being, showing you have an air force can be as important as using it.<sup>24</sup>

In a counterinsurgency effort, host nation security forces are essential and a host nation air force is a critical piece in both supporting the fight and bolstering a government's legitimacy. But the air force is only effective if sorties are generated to bolster support and show the host nation flag in action. Unfortunately, developing a capable air force takes considerable time due to the extensive training required for aircrews, maintenance personnel, and other specialists.<sup>25</sup> While this is absolutely true in regards to having a fully capable and independent air force, in a counterinsurgency where "perception is reality" there are some considerations that make employing a host nation air force different than employing a host nation ground force.

First, unlike employing ground forces, there is a greater ability to train and employ simultaneously. With ground forces, one of the primary strategic objectives is building morale and confidence. Employing poorly trained forces can result in high casualties and tactical defeats. As FM 3-24 states, tactical defeats can have serious strategic consequences in a COIN fight<sup>26</sup>. However, in multi-seat aircraft engaged in airlift, MEDEVAC, or ISR, it's entirely possible and common to train on operational missions. In fact, training on an operational mission can enhance the quality and relevance of the training objectives. Second, because perception matters and what will be seen is primarily the host nation plane and flag, the makeup of the crew is less important. While there is long-term value in having only host nation crews operating host nation aircraft, outside advisors have a unique opportunity to "prime the pump" while getting host nation aircrews trained to operate independently. Finally, whether in

a training role or an operational role, aircraft in the air generate presence. For the most part the general population will see action. Regardless of the type of mission being flown, the population will recognize there is an aircraft airborne presumably with some military purpose.

The “get them in the air” methodology serves the counterinsurgency effort well. It provides an immediate host nation presence lending support to the active engagement with insurgents as well as providing a visible indication of a viable legitimate government concerned with providing basic needs, services, and security. In effect, it is like building the exterior of a house with the intent of putting the frame and foundation in after the fact. The house is held up initially through the efforts of non-host nation efforts and resources. As the frame and foundation are completed, the outside support becomes less and less necessary and the integrity of the structure become stronger and able to support itself. Counterintuitive – maybe, but given the nature of a counterinsurgency it is an effective strategy.

#### “Get them in the Air” - The Cultural Component to Long-Term Success

In addition to contributing to the counterinsurgency effort, the “get them in the air” methodology also provides a long-term organizational cultural benefit. This is especially true with a fledgling air force where the long-term goal is a professional and effective fighting force. Culture is a concept that has gained increasingly greater amounts of attention as a critical component in the effectiveness of an organization. For those that have been a part of groups and organizations, many will attest to the fact that the group or groups they have been associated with have had some sort of unique or group-specific “personality.” Even within the U.S. armed forces there are acknowledged differences in how the various services and the members of each service perceive

themselves, how they are perceived by others, and how they interact internally and externally to the organization.

Edgar Shein says culture to a group is what personality and character are to an individual. It is a phenomena that is just below the surface, often invisible and unconscious but powerful in its impact. Culture is important because it guides and constrains the behavior of members of a group through the shared norms that they hold.<sup>27</sup> Occupations, in addition to organizations, also exhibit cultural attributes, especially those that involve intense periods of education and apprenticeship. These occupations will develop shared attitudes, norms, and values that will become taken-for-granted assumptions for their members<sup>28</sup>

The military as an organization will by nature have a strong cultural current due to the fact that it is also a profession imbedded with occupational specialties. A profession, according to Dr. Don Snider, is more than an occupation in that professions focus on generating expert knowledge and its members have the ability to apply that knowledge in new situations. This expertise is validated by a client (society) which develops a trust allowing the profession to establish and enforce its own professional ethics.<sup>29</sup> The military as a profession must account for organizational culture.

According to a RAND study on the army in a changing world, a “collective, shared sense of a distinct identity and purpose appears to be a hallmark of the most successful institutions.”<sup>30</sup> Specific to armed forces, Williamson Murray states, “military culture may be the most important factor not only in military effectiveness, but also in the processes involved in military innovation, which is essential to preparing for the next war.”<sup>31</sup>



Given the stated importance of culture in organizations, especially military organizations, it must be factored into the equation when advising, assisting or training a fledgling air force organization. Where possible, the advisory effort should seek to reinforce an effective military culture, a culture of “air-mindedness” that is unique to air force operations, and a culture supporting effective flying operations.

To better understand how “getting them in the air” impacts organizational culture it is necessary to define organizational culture and how culture is impacted or changed. Schein defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”<sup>32</sup> Schein defines three distinct levels as a way of analyzing and understanding culture within an organization.

The foundational level in Schein’s model contains what he terms the basic underlying assumptions. These are the unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings among members of the organization. At this level there is little variation within the social unit and there is a high degree of consensus resulting from repeated successes in implementing organizational beliefs and values. Basic assumptions are generally nonconfrontable, nondebtable, and difficult to change.<sup>33</sup> Accounting for these taken-for-granted beliefs is critical to understanding an organization because they can manifest themselves both positively and negatively. For example, in the U.S. military a basic assumption is the “can do attitude.” This underlying assumption grows out of the combat reality that in the field you have got to

make do with you've got and losing is not an option. While admirable in combat, this basic assumption can also have a negative consequence. For example, the desire to get the job done "at all costs" can lead to less than candid assessments or evaluations, resulting in the potential to over extend resources and stretch the force to the breaking point.<sup>34</sup>

The level above the underlying assumptions contains a group's espoused beliefs and values. These are the strategies, goals, and philosophies that are shared by the group. Beliefs and values grow out of someone's, often the group's leaders or founders, original beliefs and values of what "ought to be" versus "what is." These beliefs and values will become shared beliefs and values if there is success or validity as the group tests and acts on them. If the shared beliefs and values continue to succeed over time they will transform into a group's shared assumptions. Over time, the ability to introduce new beliefs or values will be dependent on how congruent they are with the basic assumptions that have been developed. When articulated values are congruent with the underlying assumption, groups have a greater source of identity and understanding of their core mission.<sup>35</sup>

The top level is a group's artifacts. Artifacts are the visible products of a group to include its environment, language, technology and products, rituals and ceremonies, clothing, manners of address, published values, myths, and stories. While artifacts are highly observable they can be difficult to decipher. As a result, an understanding of a group's espoused beliefs and values as well as their underlying assumptions is necessary in interpreting or providing context to the visible behaviors.<sup>36</sup>

Because the assumptions of leaders and founders are a primary influence in a new organization, it is important to plan for that impact. Understanding the various organizational culture levels provides an avenue for leaders to effectively impact and influence culture, especially in relatively new organizations.

One approach leaders and founders should take in the early stages, according to Schein, is to differentiate the organization within the environment and from other organizations while looking for ways to succeed in its primary task. The cultural paradigm that develops with the success of this primary task defines the organization's distinctive competence, becomes the basis for member identity, and becomes the psychological glue that holds the organization together.<sup>37</sup> Based on this, it is apparent that the development of a host nation air force must involve efforts that differentiate the air force from the other security forces and that its primary task must be articulated in a clearly tangible way. In the case of an air force, the primary task will be engagement in the air. Therefore, artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and eventually the underlying assumptions will need to embrace this primary task.

Schein offers a couple of mechanisms that enable cultural change to occur that support the concept of "getting them in the air." The first mechanism is what he terms as "self-guided evolution through insight." The goal is for the organization's members to collectively achieve new insight by redefining cognitive elements through the reordering of priorities within the core assumptions or even, by abandoning an assumption altogether. For example, when I arrived in Iraq, the entire Iraqi Air Force was only flying 30 sorties per week. The ISR squadron at Kirkuk was flying a handful of these sorties

conducting basic pilot proficiency training or flying relatively ineffective sorties along oil pipelines.

The ineffectiveness was due, in part, to perceptions that had developed over several years and resulted in a sense that they had nothing real to contribute to the counterinsurgency fight. Most of the pilots at that time had been in the former Iraqi Air Force that had proved ineffective in the 1991 Gulf War and had been further degraded due to a decade of UN sanctions and no-fly zones.<sup>38</sup> They also related that if they couldn't engage kinetically the Iraqi Army had no use for them. The real issue was one of unrecognized capability that had to be seen to be understood. By getting in the air and actively demonstrating the ISR capability, the situation soon developed where there were more requests for support than sorties available. By making flight operations and demonstration of ISR capability a priority, the assumption changed from "we have nothing to contribute" to "everybody knows how valuable we are" with requests for support coming from not only the Iraqi Army but all parts of the Iraqi government.

A second mechanism Schein puts forth to enable organizational culture change is through "technical seduction." Technical seduction is the deliberate, managed introduction of specific technologies in order to seduce the organization's members into new behavior. The purpose is to force members to reexamine their present assumptions and possibly adopt new values, beliefs, and assumptions. There is also the added effect of getting people to think and behave in common terms. This is especially valuable in organizations where there may be too much diversity. The new technology becomes a neutral and nonthreatening way to drive assumptions out into the open which forces decision-making premises and styles into the organizations

consciousness.<sup>39</sup> This mechanism is potentially very effective with a fledgling air force because the introduction of new capabilities and a focused effort to employ them drives the organization to focus on a very tangible goal and forces the organization to ask the critical questions about how that effort will be supported.

In Iraq, for example, focusing on increasing sortie counts brought multiple disparate efforts into a common framework which helped to prioritize them and, as a result, highlighted gaps and needs. Generating sorties quickly highlighted where logistics efforts needed to be focused, the gaps in maintenance capability and training, and the absolute need for an effective command, control and coordinating function. As a result, Iraqi Air Force leadership was able to both recognize the true cost of operations as well as prioritize resources to support those operations. Recognized deficiencies in maintenance capability highlighted both the need for a functioning NCO corps and the need for specialized maintenance and English training. As a result, advisors and their Iraqi counterparts at the technical training schools at Taji were able to redirect their efforts from valuable but not operationally effective training programs to programs that met more urgent operational needs. Finally, the increasing helicopter, airlift, and ISR sortie counts with the resulting demand for more, quickly highlighted the lack of an operational-level C2 capacity. The result was the stand up of a modest Air Operations Center that was able to integrate with the Iraqi joint force's operations center.<sup>40</sup> The use of flight operations as a mechanism of technical seduction reverberated throughout the entire Iraqi Air Force and the advisor teams as well. Assumptions, decision making, and methods were all challenged by the priority of

“getting them in the air.” The end result was an organization thinking and behaving in common terms with a shared purpose, and shared beliefs and values.

With the understanding that “getting them in the air” is a valid mechanism for cultural change it is also important to show that generating sorties also contributes to the desired and necessary attributes of military culture, developing the airman’s sense of “air-mindedness,” and reinforcing an organizational capacity to conduct safe flying operations. John Hillen, in an article for the Foreign Policy Research Institute, states military culture cannot be centered on values invented in the abstract. In fact, military cultures evolve out of men attempting to succeed in combat as an occupational necessity, resulting in codes of conduct, values, methods, procedures, and organizational values that become “military virtues.” He states the best test of military culture is demonstrated when a military’s recruits can train and fight effectively, especially when under fire. In short, the culture will follow the “principle task” for which the military prepares. Hillen also states military culture is impacted by the level of resources devoted to national defense as well as how it is organized and conducts missions.<sup>41</sup> In the case of an air force, the principle task is employment in combat operations *from the air* which requires a level of investment by the government that’s fundamentally different than that required for ground forces. Therefore, dedicating resources, organizing to support and sustain air operations, and generating combat sorties is essential to an air force’s military cultural identity.

Air-mindedness can be considered the air force-specific subset of military culture. Gen Henry H. “Hap” Arnold used the term “air-mindedness” as a way of describing an airman’s particular expertise and distinctive point of view. It is, in essence, the lens

through which airmen perceive warfare and view the battlespace. It is a mindset that's not constrained by geography, distance, or time and becomes a characteristic that distinguishes airman from those in other services. Brigadier General Billy Mitchell said airpower was "the ability to do something in the air" and that ability sparks innovation and a culture unique from the surface approach to military force.<sup>42</sup> Actively employing airpower through flight operations, therefore, becomes a necessary component to build an air force-specific culture.

Finally, "getting them in the air" is a critical cultural component to an air force dedicated to being a professional flying organization. Worldwide there are many organizations that sponsor or conduct flight operations. However, not all organizations involved with flight operations are created equal and there are those that succeed in the long term and those that don't. Aviation is an inherently risky business and the ability to maintain effective and viable flight operations over the long term is due, in part, to an effective organizational safety culture. This safety culture is a common ingredient necessary to the success of high-reliability organizations (HRO), which are organizations that succeed in avoiding catastrophes in environments where accidents are normally expected due to the inherent risk factors and complexity.<sup>43</sup> HROs are characterized by the following traits: 1) Accurate perceptions of hazards and operational risks; 2) Commitment and involvement of all management levels in safety; 3) Open reporting of unsafe conditions or risk situations; 4) Good communications up and down the command chain; 5) Continuous training with high performance standards; 6) A culture of trust between workers and supervisors.

According to James Reason, an expert in aviation psychology, this critical safety component is, in effect, an informed culture that depends on effective reporting where the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior is clearly drawn and understood.<sup>44</sup> Like Shein, he describes safety culture as being a combination of shared values (what is important) and shared beliefs (how things work) that produce acceptable behavioral norms. He acknowledges, though, the complexity of culture change and the difficulty of change through direct persuasion. Therefore, he states “acting and doing” coupled with the appropriate organizational controls become necessary in driving an organization to the right thinking and believing.<sup>45</sup> Action is required and like military culture, an effective safety culture in a high-reliability organization cannot be created in the abstract.

It is essential to factor the desired cultural outcomes into the advisor effort. Lt Col James Smith, in an article addressing culture and cohesion, states an organization’s patterned way of thinking will reflect the beliefs of the *corps* around its *core*. He describes those that are most closely related to core mission (the corps at the core) will ultimately define the mission, stake out the organization’s boundaries and ultimately control the operation of the organization.<sup>46</sup> It is essential that an air force have a sense of itself as a military organization, that it has “the ability to do things in the air,” and in a manner that can be repeated and sustained. The length of the advisor mission is not defined but the opportunity to shape and influence the cultural foundation of a fledgling organization will likely be relatively short. The act of generating sorties early – of “getting them in the air,” when the ability to influence is the greatest will have



immeasurable effects on developing the necessary cultural foundations for an effective and viable air force in the long term.

### Conclusion

At the time of this writing, the Air Force has deactivated the advisory squadrons working with the Iraqi ISR and airlift squadrons due to the progress and demonstrated capability of the Iraqi Air Force. Despite a reduced effort in Iraq, however, the U.S. Air Force's involvement and commitment to advising, training and assisting foreign air forces is continuing to grow. There is currently a full-fledged effort in Afghanistan to train and build a viable Afghan Air Corps that is similar in many respects to the efforts in Iraq. But a more important indicator of the Air Force's commitment to this emerging mission is found in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and in the Air Force's FY11 budget request.

The QDR states that within the range of security cooperation activities, the most dynamic will be the "hands on" efforts to train, equip, advise, and assist host countries in becoming more proficient at providing security to their populations and protecting their resources and territories.<sup>47</sup> The Air Force is resourcing this commitment through the proposed purchase of 15 light mobility aircraft in FY11 to use in a "building partnership capacity"(BPC) role.<sup>48</sup> This fleet is planned to grow to 60 aircraft in the future. Additionally, the Air Force is also buying up to 100 Light Attack/Armed Reconnaissance Aircraft to round out the capability.<sup>49</sup>

The Air Force is taking great strides to embrace and resource this critical and emerging mission. However, BPC aircraft, personnel, and capability will only be as good as the methodologies employed by those operating these resources. To be truly effective, those involved in advisory efforts need to fully understand the unique

capabilities of an air force. They need to thoroughly understand the environment and context the host nation air force is confronted with and operating within. And finally, advisors need to look beyond just training to achieve a capability. They need to look for ways to influence the host nation air force culturally to be effective in the long term.

## Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Chp 6.

<sup>5</sup> Robert R. Allardice, "The Coalition Air Force Transition Team: Rebuilding Iraq's Air Force," Air & Space Power Journal, Winter 2007, 8, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj07/win07/allardice.html> (accessed on October 4, 2009).

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, xxiv.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>12</sup> Alan J. Vick et al, "Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions," (RAND Corporation, 2006), 63. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND\\_MG509.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG509.pdf) (accessed December 26, 2009).

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, 371.

<sup>18</sup> Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era, 110-111.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup> LtGen Kamal Barznji, interview by Jim Michaels with author present, Kirkuk Regional Air Base, Iraq, December 23, 2007

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 224.

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<sup>38</sup> Rebuilding Iraq's Air Force, 1.

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<sup>40</sup> Rebuilding Iraq's Air Force, 4-5.

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